

Reviews of the schools found significant leadership, instructional, and organizational challenges. The turnaround teams found that more fundamental, structural change was necessary to support dramatic improvements in the achievement of all students. Teams also identified the need for ongoing, intensive training for teachers and principals. In addition to the findings of the turnaround teams, responses from 90 percent of those schools to the 2006 Governor's Teacher Working Conditions Survey underlined the need for an overhaul of school structure and culture to improve student achievement. An analysis by the Center for Teaching Quality found less time for planning, less trust among teachers and administrators, and fewer opportunities and responsibilities for teachers to have a positive impact on school organization and instruction in these low-performing high schools than in other high schools.

Based on these findings, the Governor directed the State Board of Education to launch the High School Turnaround Initiative at all schools with scores of under 60% on state tests in both 2004-05 and 2005-06. As part of the initiative, those schools had to create and implement a plan for immediate action and select a proven school restructuring plan to adopt. The state has provided facilitators to work with principals on implementing school improvement strategies and required those principals to attend a training program conducted by the Principals Executive Program and the Kenan-Flagler School of Business at UNC-Chapel Hill. In addition, teachers are being provided content-specific professional development based on the schools' needs.

Along with the school improvement work with these high schools, the new funds from the Gates Foundation will allow the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction to expand monitoring efforts to include high schools that have performed below 70 percent proficiency on state exams. These schools will receive turnaround team visits this year to review student achievement, school leadership, classroom instruction, the use of resources, and school organization, and make recommendations for improvement.

The New Schools Project was announced by the governor in August 2003 and launched with the support of an \$11 million grant from the Gates Foundation to develop new, smaller high schools in North Carolina. The New Schools Project currently administers funding to 33 *Learn and Earn* schools that provide students with an opportunity to graduate in five years with a high school diploma and either an associate's degree or two years of college credit. Twenty new *Learn and Earn* school sites are planned to open in 2007. Easley has also opened 25 smaller, economic development-themed schools and plans to open 10 more in 2007. These schools have no more than 400 students and a theme that enables students to make the connection between the courses they take and their desired career fields.

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